

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

May 10, 2010

Members: Mark Woodard, Debbie Linn, Casey Anderson, Jessica Fusillo, Evan Glass, Victor Weissberg, Kathy Stevens, Tiffany Graham-Golden, Mary Murphy, Tina Johnson, Richard Ripley, Susan Zusy, Rebecca Howland, Daniel Morales

Members Absent: Darian Unger, Nestor Alvarenga, Constance Wynn and Mary Pat Spon

Call to Order and Introduction: Mark Woodard, Executive Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes - Motion: the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board unanimously approved the April 2010 minutes

Community Comments:

Bob Colvin distributed East Silver Spring Citizens' Association, Inc. (ESSCA) newsletter
Alan Bowser announced the Second Annual Silver Spring Blues Festival, Saturday May 22, 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., with live music, harmonica lessons, dancing, kids activities and more at downtown Silver Spring on Ellsworth sponsored by Silver Spring Town Center Inc.

<http://www.silverspringblues.com>

Jennifer Nettles announced their first ever Fiesta Asia Sunday May 16, Ellsworth Drive. The group is from DC and they are bringing all the wonderful activities about Asian culture.

Chair's Report

Mark Woodard reported that Darian Unger prepared the Chair's report located on page 12 of the May packet. A few highlighted items are as follows:

- Board of election for new officers will be held in June. Debbie Linn volunteered to be the nominations Chair, if you are nominating yourself or someone else please let Debbie know. The four leadership positions are chair, vice chair, parliamentarian and secretary.
- Debbie Linn commented she has received nomination for secretary and chair but none for the other two positions. If interested please send me the nomination with no more than 100 words on why you want to run for the position. We need those members that have been on the Board longer to apply for these positions because it would be unfair to new members to ask them to become officers in their first year.
- The Executive Committee had a brief discussion on meeting in August because due to the County Budget issues several Board issues are behind but again we did not discuss it very much.
- Darian was contacted by several groups, county council members and county council candidates who were interested in presenting various countywide or statewide issues (public transportation, same-sex marriage, ambulance fee, energy taxes) at our meetings. Darian received 14 more emails from Silver Spring/Takoma Park residents opposed to ambulance fees.
- New member orientation was held for our seven new Board members. The Chair of each subcommittee attended the session and gave an overview of their committee.

- The new members introduced themselves and the region they represent as follows: Rebecca Howland (Woodside Forest), Tina Johnson, (Woodside Park), Daniel Morales, (East Silver Spring/Downtown), Mary Murphy, (Woodside Park), Richard Ripley, (Woodside Park) and Susan Zusy, (East Silver Spring). Due to another commitment Nestor Alvarenga, (Long Branch) could not attend.

Director's Report

Reemberto Rodriguez reported that the report is located on pages 14 and 15 of the packet. Highlights are as follows:

- We are dealing with numerous issues at the Regional Center and on the Board along with the incredibly difficult budget situation we are facing. The budget issues are now in County Council and they are having numerous discussions so we will wait and see what happens in the next couple of weeks. The County Executive proposal is for the five Regional Center's to be staffed by a Director, Program Manager 1 and Senior Executive Administrative Assistant. The Assistant Director positions have been eliminated and our Regional Center has not had an Assistant Director for several months. Other eliminations of staff are the Finance and Contract Management position which other departments will help us with. A very highly difficult decision was the elimination of our Principal Administrative Aide, Ingrid Funes. Mel Tull is retiring and his function had already been transferred to Department of General Services over the course of this year, we are trying to figure out how to continue providing those services. The budget situation is bad but we will continue revisiting it almost monthly.
- Thanks to Silver Spring Town Center Inc., (SSTCI) for putting together the Second Annual Silver Spring Blues Festival on May 22. They are asking for volunteers for this event and if you would like to volunteer please contact me.
- The Youth Festival was a success and to see that much leadership in young adults. Regarding youth space not only are youth welcome in the Civic Building and Veterans Plaza we are working aggressively with them to ensure that the public space and the spaces inside the building are there for them. We are working with our youth in a series of ways some of which are numerated in the report. SSTCI will be bringing some of the youth groups together to continue the dialogue regarding accessing Civic Building and Veterans Plaza. Some of the non-profits in the community are working with the Washington Architectural Foundation to get hard numbers on the square footages and type of space the youth actually need programmatically and see potentially how some of the spaces that may be going through transition in the year to come like this building may fit and those groups working on this have engaged the Foundation and we had an incredibly exciting meeting where the Foundation invited seven emerging architects that they recruited to work with the youth in an upcoming Charette some time later.
- What's going on in our neighborhoods on any given Saturday and we heard the numerous activities Jennifer Nettles mentioned last weeks event and moving forward you are guaranteed to have something to do in downtown Silver Spring and certainly that is the intent with the Civic Building and Veterans Plaza. On Saturday's for the balance of this year we are having the Fenton Street Market that is attempting to activate that part of downtown Silver Spring and how it interfaces with the Ellsworth Farmers Market.

CED Committee

Jessica Fusillo reported that:

- There was a presentation at Discovery on the Civic Building and we had Round House Theatre, Liz Habermann, Community Use of Public Facilities, Reemberto and Susan Hoffmann, Regional Center and they talked about how the building was going to be use and marketed. After the presentation we also took a hard hat tour of the building where we noticed the space for Round House Theatre and the issue came into play on how do we balance community use of space as far as our community organization and with the marketing space and our commitment to generate between \$250,000 to \$300,000 dollars annually to cover operating costs. We invited Round House Theatre and Liz Habermann to present again at the CED Committee meeting. Liz Habermann provided the information we request which was the proposed fee structure for the building and she followed-up and answers some of the questions on how the fees where arrived at. People where surprised by the fees and how high some are and how low some of them seemed. From the commercial use we felt it could be higher and the community use might have more of a sliding scale especially in light of the fact that a lot of the space is being dedicated to Round House Theatre 25% of the building and this was promised a long time ago. The Committee felt there where questioned that needed answers and we drafted a letter that we feel addresses some of those concerns. The biggest concerns is how do we balance community use, community groups and promises that where made to the community with this commercial use of space and giving so much space to one organization for basically at no cost. We asked is this the best use of free space and how will this impact the building economically or is there a better way to do this.

Round House Theatre

Danish Crosby reported that:

- Blake Robinson, Producing Artistic Director unfortunately could not be here this evening but I do have a statement from him which was distributed to all of you. Highlights of the statement are as follows:
- Round House Theatre is committed to the Silver Spring community and citizens of Montgomery County with the opening of civic building and Veterans plaza. We are bring our staff and artists to downtown Silver Spring allowing us to partner with the community in news ways and we are looking forward to collaborating with you on programming, events; festivals, and other activities
- Round House Educational Center and Black Box Theatre are used by us and a diverse collection of community partners. Next season we have already programmed these spaces for 48 of the year's 52 weeks.
- Together Round House and the Silver Spring community will continue to enrich the cultural life of a wonderful area
- We have recently taken a number of steps to increase our visibility
- It is our intent to go back to producing in the Black Box as a company but in the meantime I want to clarify it is not like the Black Box is just a rental space we are presenting a number of things over there which mean we find a company that is really exciting and we bring them into Round House and we pay them to perform. We also have groups like Forum who are not renting from us but we are hosting and frankly something very similar to what you are hoping we can help you do in the Civic Building we are

providing space for an office, and free rehearsal space and those kinds of things as a way to bring young theatre companies. (*For complete Round House Theatre Statement please refer to handout*)

Gary Stith commented that:

- The decision to have Round House Theatre in the Civic Building was made ten years ago. Former County Executive Duncan wanted a live performance venue in downtown Silver Spring and the idea of the Black Box was generated. To diversify the kind of entertainment and cultural activities and make downtown an Arts and Entertainment District Round House said they would be willing to program, utilize and bring groups into the Black Box Theatre but that their real need was educational space. The County agreed to utilize the space in front of the Wayne Avenue Garage which the developer said was not really viable retail space. In the Civic Building we saw Round House utilizing that space as helpful because it is a separate space in the building and it would help put people in the building that would be there all the time and it is part of their program needs and the idea that the space is free, frankly there is not arts organization in a County space that pays rent anywhere in the County. As a part of our agreement with Round House to use that space is they agree to provide educational and cultural activities for the community specifically most of them for free to the community that are above and beyond their normal programming activities. We are working with Pyramid Atlantic to occupy the first two floors at the new library building and activate the space. The reason is the first two floors the footprints are too small because of the purple line coming through there and does not really work well for the library uses because the library needs larger footprints. Pyramid Atlantic will not pay rent in the new library but as part of their agreement there is a list of community services that they have to provide some in conjunction with the library or they will partner with the library to do things for the library and other things they will do directly in their space such as programs for youth and children, educational programs and encourage the development of local artist. In The Civic Building there will be an agreement with Round House and in addition to the programs they currently provide for other spaces they will provide certain services through the Civic Building as part of them using that space. In terms of the 25% being used by Round House the community is getting a significant amount of more space than in the Armory.

Jessica Fusillo commented that at the CED meeting Round House stated instead of going by square foot they have spaces they do get are considered a gift donation so there is a value placed on those spaces and Blake said he would get us that information. There are in-kind donations and value placed on the space. The Committee is concerned about the Memo of Understanding and the feeling that Round House has not been given back and the Black Box seems empty even though there are things in it that happen we don't know about.

Gary Stith stated the County negotiates these types of things and are in control of its own property's. While we would like your input as to what's kinds of things Round House should provide in terms of services to the community in order to use that space we do not negotiate agreements in a public forum. You will find out what the agreement states and the term of the lease and there could be a default if Round House does not provide the services but a term is a

function of what kind of improvement they are putting in. The County is giving the space but we are not giving them their furniture and equipment they have to provide that.

After discussion the SSCAB moved that the letter be revised and sent.

Motion: The Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board agreed that the draft CED letter be amended to address two issues; asking Black Box for a more specific commitment to the programming in downtown Silver Spring and take another look at the fee structure be and sent to the County Executive and County Council regarding their concern about the new Civic Building and request that careful consideration be given to the term of the lease. *(8 in favor, 7 opposed)* *(See finalized letter dated May 17, 2010 located in informational material of packet).*

Kathy Steven suggested that she would did encourage the CED Committee to work with Round House and Gary Stith office so the Board does not just send a letter but we have a continuing dialogue.

Fire and Rescue

Chief Bowers reported that:

- The address for the New Civic Building is One Veterans Place.
- The proposed budget that the County Executive sent to Council includes a reduction of ladder truck service for one year at Hillendale and how this fits in with the other ladder truck in Takoma and Silver Spring is Silver Spring Station 1 the volunteers purchased a ladder truck as a result of a sale of fire station 1 on Silver Spring Avenue. The ladder truck belongs to the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department however the career staff from the Takoma Park Station 2 that normally had a ladder truck is detailed this year to fire station 1 to staff that ladder truck because ladder truck cannot be place in station 2 until renovation is complete.

Neighborhoods Committee

Casey Anderson reported that

- Chief Manley, Park Police gave a presentation on the mission, services and organization of the Park Police Force. He outlined the Park Police force budget and staffing levels, geographic area of responsibility, statutory authority and relationship to the Montgomery County Police Department. He discussed the proposed merger between the Park Police and County Police Department and how merging the two may not save any money because the Park Police would be in the bargaining use with the FOP and the MCPD Officers basically cost approximately \$10,000.00 a year more than the Park Police currently do so it may actually end up costing more money. The Park Police do a lot of law enforcement that does require sworn officer. Neighborhoods Committee meeting will now be on the 4th Monday of each month and the next meeting is June 28, at 7:00 p.m. *(For details of the meeting refer to section 5 of May packet).*

Mark Woodard commented that the County Executive proposed a 72% cut in Progress Place which is the center for homeless people in the Silver Spring area and provides food, shelter, showers and other assistance to them. The issue before the Board is whether we want to

comment. It is my understanding that this cut is so severe that it will essentially close down Progress Place.

Warren Hanson, Community Advocate for Interfaith Works commented that the cut the County Executive is proposing would be a Community Vision program but just to be clear two programs run out of the Progress Place building which is Shepherd Table and Community Vision. I would like to recognize Mary Mulholland, Director, Community Vision and Priscilla Fox-Morrill, Program Director, Homeless Services and Housing. This is the only program inside the beltway homeless can go during the day to receive services such as meals, access to laundry machine, vocational training and computer classes and is located nearly blocks away from this beautiful downtown area. I am here today to encourage your help as an Advisory Board and/or individuals because the HHS Committee with the help of Councilmembers Trachtenberg, Leventhal and Navarro voted 3 to nothing two weeks ago to put the Community Vision funding on the reconciliation list to the County Executive Budget so this means it will come to a full vote in County Council and the final vote is scheduled for May 27 but realistic we are looking at the next week to two days as the critical time because they are having some work sessions, private and final vote.

Kathy Stevens commented that the issue is important and suggested that Board members write individual letters because this would get the numbers up, be more effective and encourage our friends and neighbors to write.

After discussion the Silver Spring Citizen Advisory Board moved to write a letter to County Council urging them to restore funding.

Motion: (Woodard, Anderson) the Silver Spring Advisory Citizens voted to write a letter to County Council urging them to restore the \$850,000.00 as recommended by the Council Health and Human Services Committee for Community Vision. **(2 abstentions)** *(See informational Packet for finalized letter).*

Announcement

Reemberto Rodriguez announced the Tuesday, July 11 convening at the Round House Educational Center at 7:00 p.m. to receive community input and ideas on the opening of the Civic Building and Veterans Plaza on July 8 and all are welcomed.

Meeting adjourned @ 9:00 p.m.

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